United Nations A/C.1/57/PV.4

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

First Committee
4th meeting
Wednesday, 2 October 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Kiwanuka ..... (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

The Chairman: Before we commence our work, I would like to inform Committee members that they have before them informal copies of a note from the Secretary of the Fifth Committee addressed to the Secretary of the First Committee, together with a copy of paragraph 298 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the work of its forty-second session (*A/57/16*), relating to the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its thirty-ninth session on the in-depth evaluation of the disarmament programme (document E/AC.51/2002/6). The latter document is available at the documents distribution booth for delegates.

Agenda items 57, 58 and 60 to 73

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Musambachime (Zambia): I join the other delegations that have spoken before me in congratulating you, Sir, on your well-deserved election as Chairman of this very important Committee. I also wish to express my appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador André Erdös of Hungary, for chairing the Committee during the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. In addition, I welcome the other members of the Bureau, to whom I extend my delegation's full cooperation. A special welcome goes to the representatives of Switzerland and Timor-Leste, which join us as the 190th and 191st Member States of the United Nations.

It has been one year since we last met under the shadow of the tragic events of 11 September. That horror exposed our common vulnerability to the new threats to international peace and security. At this session, therefore, the Committee is expected to promote and to strengthen multilateralism as a core principle in our common efforts to prevent those threats from jeopardizing international peace and security. Multilateralism will enable the international community to create conditions of peace and security, which are important prerequisites for the socio-economic development that most of the countries represented here badly need.

The First Committee is a forum in the United Nations that can contribute to the creation of the needed positive international atmosphere through the manner in which it approaches the challenges facing humanity today. It is the view of my delegation that strengthened multilateralism will enhance the role of the United Nations in global affairs. That point was emphasized by the heads of State or Government in the Millennium Declaration two years ago. The countries we represent look to a results-based disarmament programme that will give hope to the future of our children, to whom we owe a stable and prosperous world.

The Committee's goal at this session should be to use multilateralism to strengthen global norms in order to collectively eliminate threats to peace and stability.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Together, we can eliminate the deadliest weapons of mass destruction that terrorists could use. The promotion of controls on the development, production and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction can bring hope to the world. Furthermore, disarmament efforts can advance conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The past year has witnessed a global preoccupation with the fight against international terrorism. My country has been cooperating, and stands ready to cooperate, with other countries at the regional and international levels in that fight. However, those efforts will be meaningful only if they effectively prevent terrorist groups from gaining access to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, it is necessary to ensure that multilateral institutions redouble their efforts to achieve socio-economic development in many parts of the world as a way of addressing one of the many causes of conflict.

My delegation is concerned that nuclear weapons continue to dominate the strategic considerations of important States Members of the United Nations. Zambia, for its part, is committed to the total elimination of all nuclear weapons. Any military doctrine based on nuclear weapons is incompatible with the integrity and promotion of the international non-proliferation regime, to which my country has been committed for the past 35 years.

In return, Zambia expects the five nuclear-weapon States to take immediate steps to achieve the complete elimination of their nuclear arsenals. Unfortunately, there continue to be alarming signs of continued development of new generations of nuclear weapons. That trend, if not urgently reversed, will further undermine past achievements by the international community in that important area. I wish to welcome the new treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation, signed in May 2002, on the reduction of strategic offensive forces. Zambia hopes that the world will witness many bilateral initiatives of that type.

My delegation would like to appeal to all those States that have not yet done so to become States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to the related Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Only then will the ultimate goal of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones on all five continents have meaning. Against that background, my delegation wishes to welcome Cuba's decision to accede to the NPT and to ratify the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. My Government hopes that other countries will follow Cuba's example and become parties to the non-proliferation regime.

Zambia wishes to request the Conference on Disarmament to redouble its efforts to achieve the conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty. Eliminating obstacles to the establishment of an ad hoc committee to negotiate a convention on nuclear disarmament is an issue that should be given top priority by the Conference. My delegation remains deeply concerned that progress on a convention on disarmament has been slow.

As the Committee is aware, conventional armaments — especially small arms and light weapons — are the weapons most used in many conflicts. In the light of that fact, my Government continues to support and participate in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Because of the continued decline in the performance of its national economy, my country has been unable to acquire new arms. Nevertheless, the Government continues to support disarmament with regard to conventional arms, because such arms are responsible for the destruction of life and property in many conflicts, especially those in Africa.

Zambia continues to support international efforts to promote transparency and confidence-building measures at both the regional and international levels. In that regard, Zambia is committed to support the full implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It is my Government's view that, if all States — particularly the producers — honour their obligations, the threat from that type of weapons will be eliminated in the very near future. It is Zambia's hope that all States represented in the Committee will fulfil their respective obligations under the Programme of Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

In addition, Zambia calls on the Conference on Disarmament to speed up negotiations to conclude the firearms Protocol to the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.

The other important convention of significance to my Government is the mine-ban Convention. Zambia is committed to the attainment of a truly universal ban on anti-personnel landmines for all time. It is our conviction that all States will have the political will to achieve the universal acceptance of the Convention. My country is particularly pleased to note that the Fourth Meeting of the States Parties was successfully held from 16 to 21 September 2001 in Geneva.

My delegation commends the efforts of the Governments of the United States of America, Canada, the People's Republic of China and France to support international demining efforts. My Government looks forward to continued cooperation with those countries in the coming year.

There is an urgent need for the United Nations to devote more attention to the issue of missile proliferation, as well as to the related subject of missile technology. My delegation would like the Committee to carefully consider the report of the panel of governmental experts on that subject that will be presented to the General Assembly. It is appropriate that the issue of missiles and missile technology should be considered in a multilateral forum such as the United Nations so as to ensure maximum success.

The code of conduct that is being worked out should be supported by all countries with a view to strengthening international peace and security.

In spite of the difficulties, we should not give up on our efforts to urgently resolve our differences on the issue of missiles, for our future lies in collective success in that and other fields of disarmament. Success in disarmament will strengthen international peace and security, and that in turn will create the necessary conditions for social and economic development, enabling us to concentrate resources and time on the fight against international terrorism, poverty, hunger and disease.

Mrs. Notutela (South Africa): I should like to extend my delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee for the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you and the Committee's officers lead the work of this Committee to a successful conclusion.

The crisis in the international community's endeavours to address non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control issues has further deepened in the past year. The international community has largely remained unable to substantively address these issues, which are some of the most central issues of our day. Narrow self-interest, unilateralism and lack of political will and statesmanship are paralysing our multilateral forums, which were specifically established to deal with those issues. At a time when terrorism and the potentially horrific consequences of the use of weapons of mass destruction have captured international attention, the reality that sustainable initiatives to protect international peace and security are dependent on the collective participation of the international community appears to escape us.

It is obviously very regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament, which is defined as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, and which has the primary role in substantive negotiations on priority questions of disarmament, has again been unable to agree on a programme of work. This is the case despite the fact that there is almost unanimous support in the Conference on Disarmament for some sort of mechanism to deal with the issues on which we have been deliberating over the past few years. That is also the case despite the fact that there is general agreement that nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty to ban the production of fissile material for military purposes are of concern to the entire international community, and that General Assembly resolutions call on all of us to deal with those issues.

Despite the valiant efforts and leadership shown in the Conference on Disarmament by certain countries and their representatives this year, some delegations continue to refuse to recognize the legitimate concerns of other States, while insisting that respect and understanding be shown for theirs. This continued intransigence has only exacerbated the situation and left the Conference on Disarmament — an institution of great potential — exclusivist, undemocratic, unreformed, expensive and ineffective.

There has also been little progress on nuclear disarmament and little to show on the 13 nuclear disarmament steps agreed to by all of the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear

Weapons (NPT) at the 2000 Review Conference. While significant gains have been made through the Moscow Treaty with regard to de-alerting and reliance on the substantially fewer deployed nuclear weapons, real disarmament has not been addressed. Furthermore, the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee in the new NPT review cycle was disappointing. Although some delegations expended much energy and effort on proposals and reports, no substantive interaction took place, and we ended up talking at, but not with, each other. This will need to be remedied for the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee and future deliberations.

As a country that stepped back from the nuclear weapons abyss, South Africa remains totally committed to the complete elimination of those weapons. We will, together with our partners in the New Agenda, submit two resolutions to the First Committee this year and count on past supporters to again join us in our pursuit of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

I also want to use this opportunity to extend South Africa's congratulations to Cuba on its decision to become a State party to both the NPT and the Treaty of Tlatelolco. This decision is of considerable significance, as it now leaves only three States — India, Israel and Pakistan — outside the Treaty. Cuba's decision underscores the cardinal importance of the Treaty, not only as the international community's primary instrument for preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but also as a cornerstone of nuclear disarmament. Cuba's decision further underscores the importance of moving forward on the unequivocal commitment that was undertaken by all of the NPT States parties to the accomplishment of nuclear disarmament and of the 13 nuclear disarmament steps that all agreed upon in 2000.

Cuba's decision emphasizes the inter-relationship of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, as well as the fact that by staying outside the Treaty, States are inhibiting not only the achievement of the international community's goals in this regard, but also the goals of the masses of ordinary people around the world whose voices are regrettably not often heard or taken cognizance of in this forum. Cuba's decision reinforces the self-evident truth that nuclear weapons must be taken out of the hands of all, whether States or terrorists, and that international peace and security cannot be based on the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons by, or the aspiration to nuclear weapons of, a few.

Cuba's decision underscores the fact that nuclear weapons are a threat not only to those that possess them or to those that are currently threatened by them, but a threat to us all. Cuba's decision emphasizes the fact that nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament is not the preserve of those who possess nuclear weapons, and that the duty to address these issues rests upon us all.

South Africa also welcomes the endeavours of the five Central Asian States to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that region and trusts that those efforts will add further impetus to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other parts of the world.

While the proliferation of missiles is deemed to be one of the escalating and immediate challenges to international peace and security, we were unable to address collectively even the most basic concerns in that field. The report of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on the issue of missiles in all its aspects (A/57/229) is a sad reflection of the current state of disarmament affairs. Panel members had vigorous discussions but could not agree on a single recommendation for a course of action, and could not even agree on what the nature of the problem was.

The draft international code of conduct against ballistic missile proliferation has undergone some development phases in which South Africa has actively participated. Its success will depend on the degree to which the final text will be able to attract support, especially among States possessing ballistic missiles. Early drafts have not managed to address adequately the utilization of the benefits of space for peaceful purposes, and while at this early stage the draft code of conduct attempts to address only proliferation, it would be important to have a disarmament goal included.

The lack of progress regarding the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) continues to be of concern to my delegation. The joint ministerial declaration in support of the CTBT released by Ministers of Foreign Affairs of 18 countries on 14 September 2002 underlines the urgency and commitment that those Ministers have accorded entry into force of the Treaty.

In the area of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the situation has also gone from bad to

worse — with a faint glimmer of hope being vested in the resumed meeting of the suspended Fifth BWC Review Conference, which is to take place in Geneva in November 2002. We had believed that the inability of the States parties to adopt the draft protocol to strengthen the implementation of the BWC, which had been the subject of detailed and protracted negotiations over so many years, was a low point in the history of the Convention, and we consequently approached the Review Conference in 2001 with scepticism and low expectations. However, it turned out possible for even scepticism and low expectations to be further disappointed when the Conference had to be suspended, unable even to agree on a minimal common position. The reconvened Review Conference will therefore be starting from a low point, and it will be important for the overwhelming number of States parties which joined together from all political groupings during the meetings in 2001 not to be forced into accepting a failure. South Africa was persuaded by the strong arguments put forward at the Review Conference by many of the States parties — from all of the political groupings — that it would be important for the States parties not to allow a situation in which no further work is done to enhance the implementation of the BWC. Those States parties, many of whose representatives are sitting in this room, insisted that a vacuum during the period until the next Review Conference in 2006 would be detrimental to the Convention and to our fight against the biological weapons threats confronting the international community, also as those threats are exacerbated by the scourge of terrorism.

To that end, South Africa would support a proposal at the reconvened Review Conference that would include: the rapid conclusion of the Review Conference's work with a focus on future work to enhance the implementation of the Convention, without raising divisive issues on which it is known that agreement will not be possible; no reference to the Ad Hoc Group and its draft protocol in the final document of the Review Conference; and agreement to establish a group or groups of experts to deal with a limited and non-exhaustive list of specific issues related to the Convention and to consider and reach agreement on proposals that could enhance the implementation of the Convention.

As well, such a proposal should include annual meetings of the group or groups of experts for a period of approximately four weeks in two separate periods. If there is still time available after the reconvened Review Conference in November has completed its work, the remaining time could be used by the newly established expert group or groups to begin an initial consideration of their work. Further, that proposal should include annual meetings of the States parties for a limited duration of time that would consider the work of the group or groups and decide upon further work once issues had been dealt with. The annual meeting should coincide with one of the periods of time that have been allocated for a meeting of the expert group or groups. Finally, the proposal should include the possible strengthening of the United Nations Secretariat in the area of biological weapons so as to assist the States parties, especially those from developing countries, in the aforementioned work.

With respect to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the past year has proved to be something of a challenge. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has been required to deal with difficult institutional challenges which have resulted in a lack of focus on the core business of the Organization. South Africa is gratified that those difficulties now appear to have been resolved, and we take this opportunity to wish Ambassador Rogelio Pfirter every success in his new role as Director-General of the OPCW. The OPCW has once again faced the challenge of under-funding in 2002. The upcoming Conference of the States Parties, in The Hague will seek to approve a budget that accurately reflects the needs of the Organization to fulfil its mandate to ensure the complete elimination of chemical weapons. The principle of "the possessor pays" has been clearly defined in the Convention, and those countries that possess such weapons must accept the responsibility they have brought upon themselves by developing them in the first place. The world's only disarmament treaty dedicated to the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction must not be allowed to falter because of attempts by possessors to engage in creative accounting. Given the international security climate and the widely acknowledged fact that chemical weapons are an easy option in the terrorist's arsenal, the States members of the Chemical Weapons Convention need to ensure that the OPCW focuses very clearly and effectively on its core functions of the destruction and non-proliferation of chemical weapons.

South Africa welcomes the decision by Iraq to unconditionally allow United Nations and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors into that country to fulfil their task on the verification of the destruction of weapons of mass destruction and of their capabilities in accordance with the decisions of the Security Council. A source of concern to the international community is the situation in Iraq, including its non-compliance with international non-proliferation obligations — particularly as this relates to Iraq's obligations under the BWC and the NPT, as well as its use of chemical weapons and missile delivery systems. The completion of the investigations into, and the verification of, the destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction capabilities has been much delayed, and South Africa would call on Iraq to come into full compliance with its obligations in that regard.

The situation in the Middle East, like that in South Asia, is made more complex by the aspirations of States in those regions to weapons of mass destruction. South Africa reiterates its call on those States, as well as States in other regions of the world, to all become parties to the international agreements on disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and also to comply with international norms against the proliferation of missile delivery systems. Recent history has repeatedly shown, as was the case with South Africa itself, that security is not provided by the continued retention of, or aspiration to, those weapons. The possession of nuclear weapons by the apartheid Government in South Africa was, rather, a source of instability, destabilization and continued conflict in our region.

The success of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects will be measured in terms of the commitment by States to implement the measures contained in the Programme of Action. The numerous initiatives that have been undertaken nationally and regionally to facilitate the implementation of the Programme of Action are evidence of the growing political will to effectively and comprehensively address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

South Africa has, on a national basis, continued with its programme to destroy surplus and confiscate small arms. In addition, South Africa, together with Austria, Canada, Kenya, Mali, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, successfully co-hosted the African Conference on the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms: Needs and Partnerships, held from 18 to 21 March 2002 in Pretoria. Among the objectives of the Conference were to review the commitments made in the United Nations Programme of Action and the compatible elements in Africa's Bamako Declaration, and to examine how national, subregional and international implementation processes can be supported by African nations and the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, as well as by non-governmental organizations.

African participants at the Conference also noted that for Africa, preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a key element in promoting long-term security and creating conditions for sustainable development, which is a cornerstone of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Japan, Colombia and South Africa will again submit a draft resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. One of the issues addressed in that draft resolution is the first biennial meeting to be held in terms of the Programme of Action. South Africa is of the view that that meeting should focus primarily on exchanging information on the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action by all concerned, including international and regional organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations. To facilitate the organizational planning of the meeting, it is important that an informal understanding be reached during the current session of the First Committee on who will chair the meeting.

South Africa is pleased with the outcome of the recently held Fourth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We believe that the Mine Ban Treaty has irreversibly established itself as the international norm on banning anti-personnel mines. That is demonstrated by the fact that since the Third Meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty, held in Managua in September 2001, an additional nine States have formally committed themselves to the Mine Ban Treaty, bringing the total number of States parties to 129.

Ratification of the Treaty by Angola in June this year — as the last member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) subregion to do so — makes the SADC subregion, one of the most mine-affected regions in the world, also one of the first subregions, as a whole, to formally adhere to the Mine Ban Treaty. The objective of SADC to become a mine-free region has therefore taken a significant step forward, and we sincerely hope that that ambition will become a reality within a short period of time.

South Africa welcomes the progress that has been achieved in addressing the humanitarian objectives of the Treaty, which has been greatly facilitated by the inter-sessional work programme. However, that success would not have been possible without the enabling support of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, as well as the Implementation Support Unit and the active participation of all concerned, including the numerous organizations involved in mine action, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations.

South Africa believes that the successful outcome of the Second Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons has strengthened the Convention as a viable instrument of international humanitarian law, which could proactively address various conventional weapons deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects. With the extension of the Convention's scope of application to also cover conflicts not of an international character, South Africa believes that the focus should now be placed on negotiating an instrument that would effectively deal with the issue of explosive remnants of war.

Finally, South Africa remains committed to the work of this Committee and of all other disarmament and non-proliferation forums, so as to achieve the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems and to limiting the numbers of conventional weapons to the minimum required for self-defence.

South Africa recognizes that the negative picture that has been sketched in the earlier parts of this statement may be cause for becoming disheartened and for being tempted to walk away, so as to spend our valuable human and other resources on issues that could provide a faster and less difficult return. South Africa, however, continues to recognize the critical importance of the issues with which we deal for international peace and security, not only in our time, but also in generations to come. We therefore remain determined to continue to work singly or in cooperation with other like-minded countries for the achievement of our common goals, whether it is to prevent the illicit trafficking of a single handgun used to threaten even one individual or whether it is to prevent the continued existence of the most sophisticated nuclear-tipped ballistic missile that threatens mass destruction.

The Chairman: Before I give the floor to the next speaker, may I once again appeal to delegations to kindly limit their statements to 10 minutes, so that the Committee can use its time effectively for the benefit of everybody. For those speaking in their national capacity, the time limit 10 minutes, and for those speaking on behalf of other delegations it is 15 minutes.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): I would like to begin by joining the preceding speakers in extending to you, Mr. Chairman, the warmest congratulations of my delegation on your election to guide the work of this Committee. My delegation is confident that your rich experience will be an invaluable asset to our Committee. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their well-deserved election.

In 2000, through the Millennium Declaration, the heads of State or Government of Member States expressed their solemn resolve to, inter alia, free peoples from the scourge of war and eliminate the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction. However, during the past two years, neither a breakthrough nor any significant progress has been made in multilateral negotiations on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, the United Nations Disarmament Commission could not hold its session this year, while the Conference on Disarmament has not agreed on its work programme for four consecutive years.

In view of the widely recognized urgency of nuclear disarmament, the lack of genuine progress defies logic. Is it because the accumulation of rust in multilateral disarmament machinery that the Secretary-General referred to has gotten so thick that it is inhibiting its functioning, or is it perhaps that the machinery is overburdened by the vestiges of the cold

war and requires a profound overhaul? How can we explain such lethargic movement towards the cherished goal of ordinary men and women, who are waiting eagerly for the implementation of the unequivocal undertaking by nuclear Powers to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. The failure to achieve this goal is especially disheartening in light of the new security challenges presented by international terrorism. The tragic events of 11 September have had a strong impact on both international relations and on the minds of peoples. It opened eyes to dangers and risks brought by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. The tragedy signaled the increasing danger of possible possession and use by non-State actors of such horrible weapons.

On a positive note, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), signed by 165 States, has been ratified by 93. Of the 44 States whose ratification is necessary for the Treaty's entry into force, 31 have already ratified it. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has been signed by 165 States, 146 of which have already ratified it. The Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation to reduce the deployment of strategic nuclear weapons and the initiative approved at the Kananaskis summit of the Group of Eight to earmark $20 billion to assist the Russian Federation and other countries in reducing and eliminating weapons of mass destruction raise the hope that verifiable and transparent disarmament involving other nuclear Powers could become a reality in the coming years.

Strengthening international peace and security through the disarmament process and making its own modest contribution to that end have always been a priority of Mongolia's foreign policy. Here, it has always attached special importance to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the means of their delivery. In that context, Mongolia attaches special importance to the reduction and destruction of destabilizing tactical nuclear weapons. We firmly believe that nuclear disarmament is the key not only to the solution of a wide range of disarmament and non-proliferation issues, but also to maintaining and strengthening international peace and security. Therefore, my delegation fully shares the view that there is a pressing need to make tangible progress in the areas of nuclear disarmament, in particular in non-proliferation and reduction of tactical nuclear weapons.

During the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the States parties to the Treaty committed themselves to implementing the important conclusions and recommendations contained in the Final Document. In that context, like many other States, my delegation welcomes the decision of the Government of Cuba to accede to the NPT and to ratify the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

The NPT Review Conference also concluded that there was a need to establish an appropriate subsidiary body in the Conference on Disarmament to deal specifically with nuclear disarmament issues, and it called for the immediate establishment of such a body. Breaking the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament and displaying the necessary political will to start discussion of substantive issues on its agenda are of crucial importance. Mongolia reiterates its belief that the Amorim proposal or formula (*see CD/1642*) could serve as a useful basis for further consultations. Our position is flexible. We are ready to consider any proposal that may facilitate the start of substantive work within the Conference on Disarmament.

A year ago the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, speaking at the Conference on Disarmament session, proposed that, pending the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty, the nuclear-weapon States declare a moratorium on the production of weapons-grade fissile materials and promote greater transparency through disclosure of their present stocks. He also urged the United Nations to establish a register for all stocks of weapons-grade fissile material. The recent seizure of enriched uranium in Turkey clearly demonstrates the importance and timeliness of such action.

Mongolia consistently supports the consolidation of existing and the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones, which are important components of nuclear non-proliferation that have a positive impact on regional security and stability. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the five Central Asian States on reaching an agreement on the content of a treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that region. In conjunction with the properly institutionalized nuclear-weapon-free status of Mongolia, such a new treaty could make a significant contribution to strengthening nuclear non-proliferation and to turning the entire Central Asian region, which a mere decade ago housed thousands of nuclear weapons,

into a zone of peace and predictability. This would foreclose the possibility of a nuclear Great Game being played in the heart of Asia by States or non-State actors.

Ten years ago Mongolia declared its territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone. As seen from the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/57/159, Mongolia has taken a number of concrete steps to institutionalize that status at the national and international levels. Nationally, we have adopted legislation that legally defines the status, imposes penalties for the breach thereof and sets up a national mechanism to implement the legislation. Internationally, together with the appropriate United Nations bodies, Mongolia is working to find ways of properly institutionalizing it. The 2001 Sapporo meeting of independent experts of the five nuclear-weapon States and Mongolia and representatives of the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat thoroughly examined the issue, and the participants came to agreed conclusions and recommendations (A/57/59). In line with those recommendations, Mongolia has proposed to institutionalize its status by concluding a multilateral agreement; our two immediate neighbours, China and Russia, have, in principle, responded positively to that proposal. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank our immediate neighbours for their valuable support.

Mongolia is interested in moving forward on this issue on the basis of general agreement. It is open-minded on the ways and means of further consolidating and institutionalizing that status. Being a special case, perhaps Mongolia needs an individual approach to consolidating the status and addressing the external challenges. Bearing that mind, Mongolia, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other United Nations bodies, is undertaking two studies on its economic and ecological vulnerabilities. The outcome of those studies will be useful in further consolidating the basis of Mongolia's status. At the current session of the General Assembly, Mongolia will present a procedural draft resolution that would invite member States and relevant United Nations bodies to continue their assistance in consolidating Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status.

My delegation shares the legitimate concerns of the international community over the increasing threat of the spread of small arms and light weapons and the illegal trade in them. The 2001 Conference on that subject adopted a comprehensive Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It also pointed out specific ways to develop international cooperation and provide assistance, as well as to ensure follow-up. Any positive step in the implementation of the Programme will be an important building block for resolving wide-ranging humanitarian and socio-economic issues related to this problem.

My delegation shares the view of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala concerning the daunting challenges presented by non-proliferation education and missiles. Upon my country's initiative, the decade 2003 to 2013 has been declared the United Nations Literary Decade. My delegation is confident that literacy will empower the poor and neglected and enable them to participate actively in the life of society, including in the struggle for disarmament.

Mongolia welcomed the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines as an important step in conventional disarmament. We are carefully studying the possibility of accession to the Convention.

It is also my delegation's belief that further reduction of conventional arms and the arms trade and an increase in the transparency of the military budgets of States would promote confidence-building.

My delegation wishes to underscore that the current setbacks in the multilateral disarmament process should serve as a call to Member States to redouble their concerted efforts for the search of practical and far-reaching measures of disarmament first and foremost in the field of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Faessler (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): First of all, allow me to say, on behalf of my delegation, how delighted we are to see you presiding over the First Committee. Your long experience and your great commitment to arms control and disarmament are, without doubt, important assets for the success of our work, which is more important than ever before in this particular situation marked by so much uncertainty.

You can certainly count on the full support and entire cooperation of my delegation in discharging your duties. Allow me also to thank Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala for the outstanding efforts he has been making for the

cause of disarmament. Finally, I'd also like to thank all those who have had such kind words to say to my country following our admission to full-fledged membership in the United Nations.

Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation continue to be a central, indispensable element in cooperation among States. Since this is the first time that Switzerland is participating as a Member State of the United Nations in the work of the First Committee, allow me briefly to outline the principles and objectives of the policy of my country in this area, which is an essential part of our security policy and part of the broader context of our programme of action within the United Nations.

First, Switzerland supports all multilateral efforts in the area of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation that seek to achieve concrete and verifiable results. We have acceded to all multilateral universal agreements open to my country in this area and we participate actively in seeking to re-enforce existing agreements and in the negotiation of new agreements.

In an increasingly interdependent world, Switzerland is convinced that the best way to guarantee its security lies in the conclusion of legally binding multilateral instruments, rather than through political commitments, declarations of good intentions or unilateral measures. That is why my country regrets the fact that for the fourth consecutive year, the Conference on Disarmament, the only negotiating forum on multilateral disarmament, has still not managed to adopt a work programme, despite the very commendable efforts made by all and that Switzerland supports. As a matter of urgency the Conference should embark without delay on negotiating a treaty on fissile materials.

Secondly, Switzerland is in favour of the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. In the nuclear area it is regrettable that the goal of disarmament advocated in article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains a very remote goal and that there are stocks of nuclear material for military purposes, the existence of which can hardly be justified in terms of national security.

There is also the problem of tactical nuclear weapons. My country is in favour of a multilateral, universal and verifiable agreement seeking a total ban on these types of weapons. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the CTBT, has not yet entered into force because of the insufficient number of ratifications. We welcome and join in the appeal made on 14 September by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of 18 States that all parties, all States that have not yet done so, sign or ratify the Treaty without condition and without delay.

Finally, stressing the importance of the universality of the NPT, we welcome the recent accession of Cuba to the Treaty and its ratification of the Tlatelolco Treaty.

The area of biological disarmament is a source of grave concern for my country. Biological weapons represent a real and serious danger. Know-how and technical progress in biotechnology and genetics are making rapid progress, both at the civilian and military levels, with the consequence of ever increasing risks of abuse. A concerted action by the international community is necessary here.

We welcome the appeal of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on biological disarmament. For my country the Convention on Biological Weapons remains, despite its imperfections, by far the best way to prevent the proliferation, development and use of biological weapons. We regret the fact that it has not been possible to successfully conclude the negotiations to strengthen the Convention. And we believe that efforts in this area should be vigorously pursued at the multilateral level.

Switzerland participates actively in implementing the Convention on Chemical Weapons and we have acquired resources to make a contribution to this effort. My country, along with other States party to the Convention, is continuing with efforts aimed at assistance and protection and supports those of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the area of training inspectors.

Finally, the international community has recognized that the proliferation of delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction represents a very special danger for international security. This is why we welcome multilateral efforts to establish an international code of conduct against the proliferation of missiles. This work is now very well advanced and we hope that the draft code of conduct will be adopted by a large number of States at the conference that will take place at the end of November in The Hague.

Thirdly, Switzerland attaches very great importance to the full and complete implementation of the provisions of existing agreements, as well as to the verification of compliance. More specifically, there are still doubts about full compliance with disarmament and non-proliferation commitments in Iraq and in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. My country supports the immediate resumption of inspections by United Nations inspectors and by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Iraq, as well as the resumption of inspections by the IAEA in the People's Republic of Korea.

In recent weeks we have taken note of statements expressing the will of the Governments concerned to comply with their obligations here. We are convinced that the resumption of on-site inspections will open the way to a peaceful diffusion of tension. Switzerland supports United Nations efforts here and counts on the cooperation of all States to find a peaceful solution. My country is certainly prepared to make available inspection experts to the United Nations, and, if and when necessary, to provide logistical support.

Fourthly, Switzerland supports all measures to improve transparency in the area of weapons and the export and import of all materiel, including small arms and light weapons.

In particular, Switzerland supports the efforts of the United Nations to strengthen the Register of Conventional Arms and to promote the participation of all States in its development. Furthermore, Switzerland has put forward an initiative with France on the traceability of small arms and light weapons. I will go into more detail about this within the context of the thematic debate.

Fifthly, Switzerland believes that the United Nations should play an active and constructive role in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. My country appreciates the expertise and professional competence of the Department for Disarmament Affairs in New York, the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in Geneva. These institutions, together with the regional centres in Latin America, in Africa and in Asia and the Pacific, make very valuable contributions, both conceptual and practical, to the implementation of existing agreements as well as in the framework of ongoing negotiations. Switzerland is determined to continue its financial support for these institutions and to continue to work closely with the United Nations in this field.

Sixthly, Switzerland, faithful to its tradition, strongly supports the concept of taking greater account of the norms of humanitarian law in the development, production and use of conventional weapons. The uncontrolled and indiscriminate dissemination and use of these weapons have devastating humanitarian consequences and pose a threat to security and development in many parts of the world. The new partnership that has developed among States, the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations has made it possible to elaborate and to adopt, in a very short space of time, the mine-ban Convention.

Concerning other types of conventional weapons that have humanitarian implications, my country welcomes the progress made in Geneva in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Again, I will go into this in more detail during the thematic discussion.

Finally, Switzerland is working actively to ensure that efforts in the area of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation also contribute to the global fight against terrorism.

In the nuclear area, we support measures which seek to reduce the risk of access by non-governmental entities to complete weapons, fissile materials, radioactive substances or delivery systems. In the area of biological weapons, my country, together with the World Health Organization, has established a programme to train specialists to respond to bio-terrorist attacks. In the chemical area, my country actively supports all efforts to improve assistance and cooperation in case of a terrorist incident.

The Chairman: I would like, on behalf of all representatives, to congratulate Switzerland on its admission to the membership of the community of nations as a full Member.

Mr. Cappagli (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee. Our congratulations also go out to the other members of the Bureau. You can count on the full cooperation of the delegation of Argentina.

The Republic of Argentina, today more than ever, takes the view that universalizing legal instruments in

the field of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction should be the goal for the first decade of the twenty-first century. Only with measures such as these will it be possible to lay the groundwork for mutually guaranteed security as a primary objective.

The region-wide determination to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction was reaffirmed by Argentina in July 1998 in the Political Declaration of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile as a Zone of Peace free of weapons of mass destruction. That Declaration promotes and strengthens the perception of security for all States of the region and represents a clear-cut message on the part of our countries as to our objectives of transparency, cooperation and peace.

At the subregional level, the work of the Brazilian-Argentinian Agency for the Accountability and Control of Nuclear Materials is ongoing. This symbolizes the process of our moving closer to each other on nuclear issues — a fundamental part of a broader commitment to a non-proliferation policy and to the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, all of which Argentina supports.

Within our hemisphere, our country welcomes with satisfaction the announcement by the Government of Cuba of its ratification of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — the Tlatelolco Treaty — and its decision to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This is helping Latin America and the Caribbean to become increasingly identified with the idea of non-proliferation.

At the global level, Argentina is analysing the proposals submitted at the most recent meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the NPT Review Conference, in order to continue working on them at the next session of the Preparatory Committee, which will take place in Geneva. The goal is to ensure that those steps are taken that were agreed on by the States parties to the NPT to advance systematic and progressive efforts to implement Article VI of that instrument.

Along these lines, let me highlight that call that has gone out for the signature and ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and for the immediate inception of negotiations, in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, on a convention for the prohibition of fissile material destined for nuclear weapons.

Argentina regrets the fact that, after six years, there has been no resolution to the negotiations of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological (biological) and Toxin Weapons, on the basis of the text proposed by the Chairman, to achieve an effective verification protocol that would reduce the risk posed by biological weapons and discourage their proliferation. Argentina takes the view that no country should be exempt from a legally binding regime and calls for the exploration of innovative ways legitimately to strengthen the Convention.

With respect to the non-proliferation of chemical weapons, Argentina reiterates its firm commitment to the purposes and principles that inspired the Convention, which entered into force in April 1997. In this context, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has a significant role to play, because it is responsible for handling a very difficult and complex undertaking, given the immense arsenals that have to be destroyed and the vast dimensions of the installations that have to be inspected - all of which will require large financial contributions.

The OPCW's mission has particular relevance at a time when the international community feels itself more threatened than ever by the phenomenon of terrorism. Argentina also identifies with OPCW's paramount objective, namely that of achieving universality for the Convention. Our country believes that every effort must be made to make headway on these and other issues related to the Convention.

In this vein, we are very pleased that the States parties have placed their trust in an Argentine diplomat to lead the Technical Secretariat. We believe that we must take advantage of the renewed spirit of harmony and cooperation prevailing in this new phase that we have just began.

Concern about missile non-proliferation is another pillar of Argentina's wider policy with regard to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, international security and export controls over sensitive technologies and war materiel. Strengthening international norms and political instruments to prevent the proliferation of

weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems is of fundamental importance to my country.

For quite some time, the Missile Technology Control Regime was the only control instrument in the area of missile proliferation. It is now necessary to complement this approach through universal and multilateral actions that are non-discriminatory and comprehensive. Argentina therefore supports the universalization of the effort to establish an international code of conduct regarding the proliferation of ballistic missiles that is currently the object of a negotiating process aimed at the convening of an international conference to adopt the code.

During the 2000 plenary meetings of the Regime, which were held in Warsaw, there was a consensus decision to name Argentina president of the Regime for the period 2003-2004. Argentina's active and committed participation in the Regime during the last 10 years stems from is unwavering support for missile non-proliferation efforts. In addition, Argentina also supports the work being done by the United Nations Panel of Experts on Missiles, which will present its report in accordance with resolution 55/33 A.

Confidence-building measures have played an important role by helping to create a climate of peace and friendship with our neighbours. This has been fundamental at times when democratic institutions have been tested as a result of the serious economic crisis affecting the countries of the region. Our country has been a firm promoter of confidence-building measures at the bilateral, regional, hemispheric and global levels, as we believe they provide the best way to demonstrate concretely the desire for integration and cooperation that guides our actions.

Argentina has put into practice with its neighbours practically all the confidence-building measures agreed upon at the regional level. We are determined to continue to accomplish this task while promoting measures and improving those that have already been implemented. We would also like to express our support for the work of the Disarmament Commission in the area of confidence building measures. We hope that it will be possible next year to conclude the three-year cycle with concrete recommendations.

The United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects has demonstrated the flexibility of States with regard to combating the illicit trade in these weapons. It would therefore be desirable — utilizing international experience and the conclusions contained in the reports of the various groups of experts — to develop international criteria on arms transfers and discovering illicit trade routes and determining how they are supplied.

Using as points of reference the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference and the Inter-American Convention against Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunitions, Explosives, and Other Materials. Argentina is carrying out, or about to carry out, national disarmament programmes aimed at curbing or eliminating urban violence and halting the proliferation of firearms.

At the subregional level, the second meeting of the Common Market of the South arms group, which includes Bolivia and Chile and which was established by a decision of the Presidents of the six countries, held its second meeting in March this year at Buenos Aires. That meeting reaffirmed the principal objective of becoming a subregional mechanism for implementation and follow-up to both the Inter-American Convention and the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

The Ottawa Convention was able to transform into international obligations the imperative of eliminating anti-personnel mines, which cause serious harm to civilian populations and whose negative effects continue for decades after the end of the conflicts that gave rise to their use. Our region has been among the most active in responding to this commitment, given the fact that almost every country in Latin American and the Caribbean is party to this instrument.

Argentina fully shares the objectives enshrined in the Convention, and has worked towards its universalization and its implementation. We have also submitted our national report in conformity with article 7, taking into consideration the progress made in carrying out our plan to destroy stockpiled mines.

Moreover, Argentina hopes that the next conference to revise the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons will be an opportunity to strengthen that instrument, which is so valuable to international humanitarian law. In that regard, we also hope that the outcome of the activities of the working groups will provide an answer to the problem of

explosive war remnants and other weapons having indiscriminate effects.

As the statements made in this general debate have illustrated, we have before us a considerable number of issues to resolve that are vital to the establishment of a safer world. Resolving those issues will require genuine political will on our part to unite our efforts in order to achieve this basic goal of the international community.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): At the very outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. In the same vein, felicitations are also due to the other officers of the Committee. The Under-Secretary-General, my good friend Mr. Dhanapala, deserves to be thanked in particular for his comprehensive statement. We welcome to the Committee our new members, Switzerland and Timor-Leste.

We are meeting here for the general debate after a rather difficult and eventful year following the dastardly terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. This has led to new thinking in the concept of security. While efforts to resolve major conflicts in many parts of the world have shown hopeful progress, we have seen the emergence of a new sense of unease, tension and instability.

Despite considerable initial success, the war on terrorism remains unfinished and to a large extent wanting in proper direction for the next phase.

The situation in the Middle East and the Gulf seems to be sinking deeper into the morass of wider conflict.

There is no sign of lessening of violence in the Middle East as efforts by the Quartet and other influential players fall badly short of the much-needed serious and concerted push for a revival of the peace process.

The threat of new war in the Gulf appears to be looming larger day by day, despite efforts by many to avert it.

Peace and security in Afghanistan remain elusive, despite the victory over Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Efforts at reconstruction, rebuilding and rehabilitation have yet to gain any meaningful momentum. The situation is fraught with the danger of slipping back into anarchy if the international community fails to garner considerably more resources and to make further efforts under well-thought-out and well-coordinated plans and programmes.

Tension between the nuclear-capable neighbours in South Asia; festering conflicts in different parts of Africa, in spite of positive developments in Angola, Sierra Leone, Sudan and the Congo; the hot spots in Eastern Europe; and slow progress in the implementation of peace-building in the former Yugoslavia — all are continuous causes for concern.

International security is also under constant threat from the continuously increasing gap between the countries of the North and the South — the gap between the rich and the poor; from political, economic and social injustice, inequity and unfairness — more real than perceived; from the lack of respect for democracy, human rights and rule of law; and from natural calamities, famine and diseases. Delegations have addressed all these issues in general terms in previous weeks in the general debate in the plenary. Many of these issues will receive more specific attention in the other Committees.

In this Committee, we focus on the issues of disarmament as they relate to the United Nations Charter objectives of promoting peace and security and contributing to socio-economic and political development across the world, making it a better place to live in.

Our predecessors, who founded this body, the United Nations, and wrote its Charter, in their wisdom realized the great need for and value of disarmament as one of the key steps towards achieving the aforementioned objectives. They put their faith in the four Ds — détente, disarmament, decolonization and development. Major achievements were recorded in the first half-century of the United Nations in the area of disarmament. Much more remained to be done to move towards the ultimate objective of general and complete disarmament.

However, we are sad to note a reversal in the trend. It appears that disarmament has gone out of fashion. There is a discernible reduction of attention and interest among Member countries on these issues. Two apparently contrary reasons seem to be responsible. The first is a sort of complacency towards whatever has been achieved so far; the second is a sense of frustration, powerlessness and hopelessness on

the part of most Member States that major military Powers are not willing or ready to move seriously towards general and complete disarmament for all kinds of political and other reasons of their own.

Jonathan Dean, writing in a United Nations Association of the United States of America publication, says about the past year:

> "The modest progress achieved in disarmament during the past year coincided with a number of serious reverses in multilateral arms control and disarmament".

However, the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization perhaps deliberately tries to look at the few positive developments witnessed during the period and to largely ignore the negatives. The first sentence of the relevant section is but an apology for an admission of the reality. It reads:

> "There was little international cooperation in multilateral forums on disarmament the past year". (*A/57/1, para. 63*)

The signing of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty by the Presidents of the United States and the Russian Federation on 24 May 2002 to reduce strategic nuclear weapons considerably was perhaps the single most important positive event in disarmament during the past year. Very few believe that this will succeed in counteracting the damage done by the demise of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. The general feeling is that the new Treaty could have proven more useful if the concepts of transparency, verifiability and irreversibility were built into it with greater clarity.

Among the other positive developments are increased participation by Member States in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms; regional initiatives in implementing the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in 2001; progress in mine action leading to further reduction in the production and transfer of landmines; some progress in specific conflict or post-conflict zones in practical disarmament in the form of the collection of arms and ammunitions from former combatants or illegal holders; and some success in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in general. In this connection, efforts of the concerned parties — including the Department for Disarmament Affairs, groups of States interested in practical disarmament, as well as some non-governmental organizations — are worth commending. The successful holding earlier this year of the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the next Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is also worth mentioning.

An event of great positive significance is the recent declaration by Cuba of its intention to join the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State. We welcome that decision. We call on the remaining three States not yet parties to the NPT to follow Cuba's example at the earliest possible moment.

Sadly, the list of negatives is not only much longer, but also disproportionately more serious and disturbing. I shall only mention some of the more serious ones to flag our deep concern, including the scrapping of the ABM Treaty; shifting emphasis on missile defence systems; nuclear posture reviews by nuclear-weapon States; renewed emphasis on tactical nuclear weapons; nuclear targeting of non-nuclear-weapon States; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)'s remaining far from entry into force; continuing efforts to develop new and more deadly conventional and nuclear weapons; a renewed arms race, particularly among major military Powers, including nuclear Powers; a dramatic increase in military spending by major military Powers; the continuing deadlock in negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on nuclear disarmament and a fissile material cut-off treaty, as well as on efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space; the suspension of the review of the Biological Weapons Convention; and so on. Disarmament has taken so much of a back seat that, this year, the Disarmament Commission could not even hold its regular annual session.

Despite progress achieved in recent times, Bangladesh remains among the vast majority of developing countries constantly preoccupied with the struggle to maintain their relevance in this world of globalization by confronting the challenges of socio-economic and political development in the face of a lack of resources, widespread poverty, diseases and natural calamities. We can neither afford nor do we want to spend large amounts on armaments and military budgets. We are fully aware of the value of disarmament as an essential and important factor for achieving peace and security within and among nations, as well as for creating a conducive

environment for and contributing directly towards development. I am sure that all countries — big or small, rich or poor — have the same realization of the value of disarmament, even if some may not like to acknowledge it publicly.

There can be no debate that disarmament is closely linked to development, as is security. Disarmament involves non-proliferation and an end to the arms race; a reduction in armaments and military personnel; bilateral, regional and international treaties; other confidence-building measures; and a reduction in military expenditure, freeing resources for other development activities. It also involves disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. All these contribute directly and significantly to enhanced security, as well as to political, economic and social development. Sustainable disarmament is also a precursor to and precondition for sustainable security and sustainable development. Disarmament leads to a lessening of tension, reduces the prospect of war and allows people to focus more fully on other development challenges.

Bangladesh, therefore, calls on all Member States of the United Nations — big and small, rich and poor — to seriously consider the growing negative trends in the area of disarmament and to coordinate their efforts to bring renewed vitality to that pursuit, keeping in view the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament. It should be pursued multilaterally, bilaterally and unilaterally. It should be pursued globally, regionally and domestically.

To that end, my delegation would like to particularly call for a few concrete steps. The first is revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament by pushing seriously for progress on deadlocked negotiations. The Conference on Disarmament should be used as the primary forum to negotiate all global treaties and conventions on disarmament. Attempts to bypass the United Nations system in such negotiations would give rise to questions of legitimacy and credibility. Regularly scheduled meetings of the Disarmament Commission should be held in order for it to be able to complete the tasks assigned to it by the General Assembly and to undertake new tasks as they arise. Implementation of the 13-point Action Plan adopted at the 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) should be ensured. Steps should be taken to ensure the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Greater emphasis should be placed on improving monitoring and verification regimes in respect of all disarmament and non-proliferation-related treaties and conventions by increasing transparency.

Irreversibility of all disarmament measures must be ensured. Safeguard measures must be strengthened to ensure that nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as chemical and biological weapons and related technology, do not fall into the hands of terrorists. Regional disarmament arrangements must be promoted by encouraging dialogue in different regions. The United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament could play a proactive role in facilitating such dialogues. In that context, I must mention that the continued failure of the authorities concerned to shift the Regional Centre for Asia and the Pacific to Kathmandu, its designated location, defies our comprehension.

The concept of zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction should be pursued to cover more regions. Particular emphasis should be placed on the early achievement of such status in the Middle East. In that context, we emphasize the urgent need to persuade Israel to join the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and to place all its nuclear installations under international monitoring. Like other States in the region, Israel must also be persuaded to give up procurement, production, stockpiling and the use of all other forms of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons. Inspite of the demonstration of nuclear capability by two Member States in South Asia, renewed efforts should be made to persuade them to relinquish the nuclear option and join the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States.

Renewed efforts should be made to reverse the trend of increasing military expenditure, particularly by the major military Powers. The concepts of the peace dividend and the creation of a global fund for poverty alleviation should be seriously reconsidered in that context.

Bangladesh is committed constitutionally to the goal of general and complete disarmament. We are already party to almost all disarmament-related treaties and conventions, including the NPT, the CTBT, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Ottawa Convention

on Anti-Personnel Landmines and the Biological Weapons Convention. I wish to reiterate our firm commitment to actively pursue disarmament in cooperation with all neighbours in South Asia, as well as all other members of this body.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that, individually, Bangladesh, like many other countries, has only a marginal ability to influence the global issues of disarmament inspite of our firm commitment. But, those who can must do more. Of course, by pooling our efforts, countries — big and small, rich and poor — we definitely can achieve much more.

Mr. Al-Kulaib (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, on behalf of the State of Kuwait, to extend to you, Sir, warm congratulations on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that, given your experience and skill, our deliberations will be successful. At the same time, let me assure you of my delegation's commitment to fully cooperate with you to ensure the success of your work. We also express thanks and appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador André Erdös, for his effective and skilful stewardship of the First Committee during the past session. Our warm congratulations also go to the members of the Bureau.

First Committee discussions are taking place against the backdrop of the first anniversary of the 11 September terrorist attacks, which terrified the international community and claimed the lives of many innocent civilians. That fact confirmed that terrorism cuts across religions, nationalities and borders. Once again, in Kuwait we share the grief of the bereaved families, and our hearts and prayers go out to them. Of course, trauma of that kind cannot be forgotten. Kuwait has also been a victim of terrorism in all its forms. Therefore, I wish to emphasize once again Kuwait's full and firm condemnation of all terrorist acts.

We have seen the results of the solidarity and the determination of the international community in confronting the plague of terrorism, beginning with the adoption of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). We must renew that determination and reinvigorate that spirit in order to stem the tide of another plague that poses a threat to international peace and security: nuclear weapons and all kinds of weapons of mass destruction.

The time has indeed come for taking strong political and fateful decisions in order to implement internationally agreed measures to rid our world of weapons of mass destruction. We have all listened to many statements in recent days, and in the next few days we shall hear statements appealing for the same thing. The peoples of the world have decided to live in a peaceful, safe and secure world.

Kuwait cannot accept that States that possess such weapons continue to hold them. Nor can we find any excuse for procrastination in implementing the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. We all hope that appeals made by Governments of the world will be met by favourable response, and we remind them that they hold both the responsibility and the solution. In that regard, my country has welcomed the Moscow Treaty as a positive step towards the reduction of deployed nuclear strategic weapons in the United States and the Russian Federation. We urge both sides to take further irreversible, transparent and verifiable measures, in order to fully eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

My country has also welcomed Cuba's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). That is another step forward. In that regard, we call on Israel, the only country in the Middle East that has not acceded to the NPT and the only State that has nuclear weapons, thereby defying United Nations resolutions and repeated international appeals to accede immediately to the NPT, to eliminate its nuclear weapons and subject all its nuclear installations to the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We also call upon all countries of the world to stop sales of scientific and technological products that enhance the nuclear arsenal of Israel or of any other State seeking to develop programmes for weapons of mass destruction.

Kuwait reiterates its support for convening a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. We support the conclusion of a non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable multilateral treaty to prohibit the production of fissile materials used in producing nuclear weapons and other explosive nuclear devices. Israel's nuclear status constitutes an obvious disruption of the regional balance of power and is a source of ongoing concern for the entire Middle East region. It remains the main obstacle to making the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

Allow me to underline once more our welcome of the proposal of Secretary-General Kofi Annan to convene an international conference to identify ways of eliminating the nuclear threat, which was adopted in the Millennium Declaration. I would like to recall the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of July 1997 on the illegality of using nuclear weapons or of threats to use them for the resolution of disputes. We support the conclusion of international agreements to give guarantees to the non-nuclear-weapon States.

Regrettably, after one year, the Conference on Disarmament has failed to agree on its agenda. We have not achieved universal adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has not yet entered into force. Military expenditures and weapons sales continue to grow. In the past year, countries spent approximately $800 billion on all kinds of weapons. The spectre of nuclear weapons looms on the horizon.

It is regrettable that we do not take into account the general progress made with regard to sustainable development, finance and trade at the conferences of Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg so that we may compare our achievements in those areas with our achievements on disarmament, which are negligible.

The world has seen many crises, and our peoples view the future with pessimism and anxiety. We must put the interests of our peoples above all other considerations in order to eliminate the pessimism of future generations. We are hopeful that tomorrow will give us a better future and that we will be able to drop from our vocabulary words like war, weapons of mass destruction, genocide and terrorism. My country wishes you, Sir, and the international community peace and every success.

Mr. Stagno (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your well-deserved election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I can assure you of the unreserved support of Costa Rica. I should also like to congratulate all the officers of the Committee.

Costa Rica has special authority on the issue of disarmament. We were the first country to comply unconditionally with General Assembly resolution 41 (I), entitled "Principles governing the general regulation and reduction of armaments", unanimously adopted at the first session of the United Nations General Assembly, in 1946. That historic resolution, which reflects better than any other the very essence of the United Nations, has been forgotten and has passed into oblivion. We hope its sad fate does not presage the ultimate destiny in store for the disarmament initiatives now being pursued. We condemn in the most categorical terms the continuing ambivalence and resistance with respect to the adoption of concrete measures leading to universal disarmament.

In 1949, with the constitutional abolition of our armed forces, we declared peace with the world. That exemplary act of selflessness has not been emulated by any other country. We placed ourselves in the hands of international law. We put our faith in the effectiveness and absolute primacy of the legal instruments governing international relations. We gave priority to promoting social development as the inherent basis for the legitimate security of our citizens.

Costa Rica has a long history and experience in promoting the disarmament agenda. Frankly, we are disappointed that little progress has been made. We feel disillusioned by the ritual calls to put an end to all wars. As long as we have arms, we will have wars. The equation is simple.

We hope that the warning we received when we discovered the new capabilities of international terrorism will enable us to move towards general disarmament. The solution lies neither in proliferation nor in the specialization of weapons but, rather, in their reduction and gradual and universal elimination. Terrorist groups, as is the case with all armed groups operating in the world, do not produce arms. They buy them. Our common enemies are armed because they have taken advantage of our lack of commitment to an effective regulation and reduction of arms. The price that we have paid is incalculably high.

While it is true that there is a certain shared responsibility for the little progress made on disarmament, the responsibility of a few States is very clear. It is ironic that 98 countries present here speak of peace when they have and maintain armament industries that, by definition, rely on war for their very existence. War is a business, and no matter how violent or unjust it is, it is still business.

Moreover, war is a dirty business. Only 20 per cent of the legal international market for small and light weapons can be documented and tracked by national customs services. Only 22 of the 98 countries that manufacture this type of arms publish any type of

official report on the sales and transfers carried out. In 2001, some 54 countries were linked to transfers and resales in explicit violation of the existing international embargoes.

There is a great lack of transparency in the international arms market. The control mechanisms regulating this market are obviously deficient. Licenses for the sale of arms, end user or final use guarantees and the rest of the existing control measures are insufficient. Transparency is currently not a priority. Parallel and illicit arms markets survive thanks to the action — or inaction — of many Governments.

This deadly market which respects no borders requires an exceptional international system of regulation. In this sense, we welcome the signing of the International Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three protocols, although we regret that they do not include the sale or transfer of arms between States or to non-State entities. The Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons suffers from the same defects.

It is absurd to claim that only arms merchants profit from war. In some instances, the companies producing the arms also make profits at the expense of the public purse. The manufacture of arms is heavily subsidized. In addition, several Governments offer tax benefits to the arms industry in the form of the so-called offset agreements and recoupment fees in order to make those companies more commercially competitive.

We are deeply concerned at the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament. While in the past it has achieved its goals, approving the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, it currently devotes its time to sterile debates. It is unacceptable that some States take advantage of the defects in its structure and proceedings in order to evade their previous commitments.

General disarmament of weapons of mass destruction is an unavoidable commitment. In its Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996, on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, the International Court of Justice was clear in declaring that "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects." In this sense, we plead for the creation of an ad hoc group that would smooth the way towards full compliance with commitments entered into.

Costa Rica condemns the use, possession, threat of the use of and development of nuclear weapons. From an ethical, juridical and strategic point of view, there is no justification whatsoever that would legitimize developing this kind of weapons of mass destruction. We repudiate any military doctrine that would seek to justify the possession of nuclear weapons on the grounds of a misconceived conception of national security, statehood or military power.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one of the fundamental pillars in the fight against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. This Treaty, by banning nuclear test explosions, and by establishing an effective verification system, creates real obstacles in the way of developing any new nuclear weapons. For this reason, we are pleased to see that 166 nations have already signed this international instrument and that 94 have already ratified it. However, we note with consternation the fact that 13 countries that are nuclear-capable, including two Security Council members and others that have already carried out nuclear explosions, still have not ratified this instrument. Therefore, we urge and call upon all States that have not yet ratified the CTBT to do so at an early date. The CTBT's early entry into force is no more than a first step towards general and complete nuclear disarmament. What must be adopted is a universal, juridically binding instrument that would prohibit the production of fissile material and consolidate the safeguards against the use or threat of use of this kind of weapon.

We deem it necessary to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), with a view to beefing up its verification capability and creating an effective system for guarantees covering the physical production of nuclear material.

We are appalled at the lack of progress as to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC). Biological weapons must be completely eradicated. In this sense, and in light of the Review Conference to be held next month, Costa Rica considers it necessary to adopt a specific plan — a

consensus-based and practical plan — that would facilitate implementation of that Convention.

The arms trade countless effects, including a heavy death toll. In 1998, a total of 588,000 people were recorded as having died in a variety of conflict areas. On the basis of data gathered by the Red Cross, it is estimated that 35 per cent of all war victims counted between 1991 and 2001 were civilians.

It is estimated that there are some 300,000 child soldiers in active combat in 41 countries, and another 500,000 recruited by insurgent or paramilitary groups. If we add to this data the number of displaced persons, or those whose basic needs are suffering from shortages or other adverse effects, such as violence, the total number of victims becomes intolerable. In addition, on the basis of the 2001 Human Development Report, out of 138 countries for which we have relevant data, 51 allocated more resources to military expenditures than to education, health care and preventive medicine.

In the twenty-first century, we find ourselves with too many societies that are armed, but that are illiterate and sick. This can hardly be considered a sign of progress. Ever since 1997, in order to fight these negative consequences, to achieve greater transparency in the arms trade and to rein in the diversion of arms to illegal groups that jeopardize our security, Costa Rica has been spearheading the drive in favour of an international ethical code governing the transfer of arms. This instrument was endorsed and prepared by 19 personalities and institutions honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize, including our own former President, Dr. Oscar Arias Sánchez. We urge all Member States committed to a secure and lasting peace to support this initiative, which seeks to ban the transfer of materiel and military personnel and to eliminate financial and logistical backing for those States whose military, police or paramilitary units participate in or contribute to the perpetration of human rights violations.

Costa Rica supports the collective fight to destroy and eradicate anti-personnel mines. We, therefore, hail the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We are pleased that 129 States have ratified this Convention, including the countries in the world that are hardest hit. My country, always committed to universalization and effective implementation of the Convention, appeals to countries that have not yet become party to the Ottawa Convention to ratify it at an early date.

Mr. Ulland (Norway): Let me first join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Committee and assure you of my delegation's full support.

The horrific attack on the United States a year ago demonstrated to the world that there are terrorists who will stop at nothing in their efforts to disrupt and destroy. It also demonstrated that international terrorism constitutes a threat to international peace and security. This threat must be fought by all available means, in accordance with the United Nations Charter. We can only imagine the impact if terrorists were to use weapons of mass destruction now or in the future. This is why arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation measures are so important in our efforts to combat terrorism. The challenge for this Committee is to identify measures and ways that can deny terrorists the possibility of acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

We recall that last year's session of this Committee adopted a consensus resolution recognizing the close link between international terrorism, illicit arms trafficking and the illegal movement of nuclear, chemical, biological and other potentially deadly materials. In order to build a common response to global threats, the resolution reaffirmed multilateralism as a core principle for disarmament and non-proliferation and expressed concern about the lack of progress in this area.

Now, a year later, we should ask ourselves whether we have lived up to our commitments, or are still dealing with multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament in a "business as usual" manner. I am thinking of the lack of progress in important areas, such as negotiation of a fissile material treaty, universalization of important treaties such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and compliance measures for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

There is no doubt that the international community has responded forcefully in a number of areas to the threat posed by terrorism. At the same time, my delegation continues to be concerned about

the lack of sufficient progress in multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation diplomacy and of sufficient recognition of the importance that the work in this area has for our fight against international terrorism. We call upon all Members of the United Nations family to renew and fulfil their individual and collective commitments in this respect.

The Norwegian Government continues to view the NPT as the cornerstone for international non-proliferation and disarmament efforts. The Action Plan and its 13 points for the systematic and progressive achievement of nuclear disarmament identified in the NPT 2000 Review Conference document are key reference points here. Regrettably, there is still slow progress in the implementation of some of these 13 points.

A welcome development is the United States-Russian Federation agreement on a new treaty on further reductions in strategic nuclear warheads. Reductions in the numbers of operationally deployed strategic warheads will be an important contribution to the implementation of the decisions of the 2000 NPT Review Conference and to continued strategic stability and enhanced security in the new international context. While welcoming reductions in strategic nuclear warheads, Norway underlines the need for verifiable and irreversible reductions.

At the NPT Preparatory Committee in April there was a widely held view, which was also expressed in the Chairman's factual summary, that non-strategic nuclear weapons must be further reduced in a verifiable and irreversible manner. We hope to see an early start of negotiations on further substantial cuts in the arsenals of tactical nuclear weapons.

The unilateral declarations by the United States and Russian Presidents in 1991 and 1992 resulted in the elimination of a great number of tactical nuclear warheads. Those declarations are still relevant and should be reconfirmed and strengthened. We encourage the adoption of transparency measures, such as reporting on the implementation of those two important declarations, as well as reciprocal information exchanges between the two countries involved. In that regard, we would like to point to the transparency measures that NATO has proposed to Russia. It could also be useful to consider how the important United States cooperative threat-reduction programme can contribute to the safe storage and dismantlement of tactical nuclear warheads in Russia.

Universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and its early entry into force continue to be a high priority for Norway, despite the difficulties that have been encountered in this process. Self-imposed moratoria on nuclear testing are a useful measure pending the entry into force of the CTBT. Such moratoria cannot, however, replace the legally binding commitments represented by the signing and ratification of the Treaty. The verification regime is at the core of the Treaty. The full and speedy implementation of the international monitoring system — without waiting for the entry into force of the Treaty — would be a significant confidence- and security-building measure. Financial and diplomatic support for the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT organization must continue unabated.

As many who have spoken before me have done, it is with great regret that we too note the continuing stalemate in the Conference of Disarmament. This situation is undercutting the credibility of the Conference, as well as that of multilateralism in disarmament and arms control. We sincerely hope that the present consultations on the Conference's work programme will finally be successful, and that the Conference will be able to start substantive work by 2003. In that respect, we support the recent cross-regional initiative by five former Chairmen of the Conference.

We consider that the top priority for the Conference should be to start negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable fissile-material cut-off treaty. A cut-off treaty is the next logical step on the multilateral arms control agenda, and is essential if we are to advance nuclear non-proliferation. As long as there is a deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament, we welcome the parallel process to identify and assess particular and technical aspects of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

We need to deal with the entire field of weapons-usable fissile material in a comprehensive manner. All nuclear-weapon States should conclude and implement agreements to place fissile material that is designated as no longer required for military purposes under the verification regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We advocate the principle of irreversible disposition in order to ensure that excess

stockpiles of fissile material remain outside the military nuclear cycle. To that end, IAEA monitoring is required.

While initiating negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, the Conference on Disarmament should also address in a substantive manner the other issues on its agenda such as negative security assurances, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and nuclear disarmament.

The "10 plus 10 over 10" initiative, taken by the G-8 in Canada this summer to intensify and improve coordination of international efforts against the spread of weapons and materials of mass destruction, is an important initiative that has our full support. Since the middle of the 1990s, Norway and Russia have cooperated closely on nuclear safety and waste issues and, more recently, also on chemical-weapon destruction. This cooperation grew out of environmental concerns, but clearly there is a close link between environmental issues such as the safe disposal of nuclear waste and nuclear non-proliferation and prevention of terrorism.

Norway believes that strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention must be a priority for the international community, especially in the light of the use terrorists could make of such weapons.

When the Review Conference resumes, we should use it to reaffirm our commitment to preventing the production, proliferation and use of biological weapons. We urge all States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention to demonstrate sufficient flexibility so that a consensus decision can be reached when the Fifth Review Conference resumes. As part of that, we need to explore further national and multilateral measures to ensure compliance with the Convention.

Norway continues to be concerned about the proliferation of ballistic missile systems capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. We must curb and reverse this trend as an important part of our common agenda to combat terrorism by State and non-State actors alike. We need a broad and comprehensive strategy involving political, economic and diplomatic means. We see the work on an international code of conduct as a first step and as a basis for strengthening international efforts in this field. We encourage all countries to join this important initiative.

The United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons is a good starting point for intensifying our efforts to deal with what the Secretary-General has described as weapons of mass destruction in slow motion. The emphasis must now be on full implementation of the Programme at the national, regional and global levels. We are pleased to see the encouraging momentum that is taking place on all continents. Norway's emphasis is on tracing and brokering, stockpile management and destruction of surpluses, disarmament and development, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and, last but not least, on assisting affected countries.

Let me reiterate our firm conviction that we need a broad mobilization of Governments, civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations family and regional organizations in the follow-up activities. The Norwegian Government stands ready to contribute both financially and politically to the successful implementation of the Programme of Action. We are currently working together with a number of Governments regional organizations and NGOs on close to 20 different small-arms projects.

We are encouraged by the growing number of signatures and ratifications of the Mine-Ban Convention and by the clear reduction in the use of anti-personnel mines, the dramatic drop in the production of these mines, the almost complete halt in the trade and transfer of anti-personnel mines, the considerable funding available and the significant decline in the number of new mine victims. This clearly illustrates that the Mine-Ban Convention is becoming an international norm, and that multilateralism can work. There is a strong partnership between all States parties and across all regions. There is a strong partnership between Governments, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the International Committee of the Red Cross. But there is no room for complacency. There are still too many victims and there are still large areas of land that need to be marked and cleared. We therefore need continued political and financial commitment in order to reach the humanitarian aims we have set ourselves. Norway's commitment to mine action remains as strong as ever.

Norway welcomes the successful outcome of the Second Review Conference of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons. We were greatly encouraged

by the decision to extend the scope of the Convention to internal conflicts. We were also pleased to see that there was consensus on setting up a group of experts to consider a mandate for negotiating a protocol to the Convention on explosive remnants of war. We hope that it will be possible to reach agreement by the end of the year on a mandate for negotiating such a legally binding instrument. Within the context of the Convention, Norway also supports the efforts to better address the humanitarian challenges posed by anti-vehicle mines.

Let me also say that Norway welcomes the effort to promote education on disarmament and non-proliferation. The report by the Secretary-General both underlines the need for more efforts in this area and the fact that we need to reach out to all groups.

In conclusion, effective multilateral cooperation is more important than ever. Forging a solid coalition to promote non-proliferation and disarmament is crucial. We hope this session of the First Committee will help mobilize the political will of Governments to continue ongoing multilateral initiatives and to step up efforts to find solutions and get moving in areas that are still deadlocked.

Mr. Yépez Lasso (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am pleased to congratulate the Chairman and the other members of the Bureau on their well-deserved elections. Your personal qualities, Mr. Chairman, as well as your great professional abilities, will ensure the successful outcome of our work. Likewise, I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for his enlightening introduction and for the reports submitted at this session of the Committee's work.

Ecuador associates itself fully with the statement made by the Representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Rio Group.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September against the United States of America, which my country condemned when they occurred, have given rise to a wide-scale examination of the threats to international peace and security at the start of the twenty-first century. Today's threats are different in nature. Long-running conflicts for which there is no fair and lasting solution in sight, extreme poverty, terrorism, drug trafficking and transnational crime must all be confronted with the weapons offered by international law and cooperation. Similarly, greater development and well-being for peoples, democracy and lofty human values must have real meaning for the vast majority of people living in poverty. Social justice, respect for human rights and better access to work and to be productive for people in the developing world will therefore make a decisive contribution to the genuine establishment of international security and stability, as well as to the stability and strengthening of democracy and its fundamental freedoms.

The international environment is characterized by an atmosphere of confrontation and uncertainty. The violence in the Middle East and the non-implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, along with the continuation of other conflicts between nuclear-weapon States, pose a threat to international peace and create major obstacles along the path towards disarmament, non-proliferation and international security.

The rejection of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the new political and military doctrines that include unilateral preventive military action and do not exclude first-strike use of nuclear arms against potential enemies that have been identified as proscribed States are causes of justified concern for countries that have opted for the rule of law, disarmament and the promotion of confidence-building measures in their international relations. Likewise, non-adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) by the sole State in the Middle East with a nuclear capacity serves to heighten mistrust and insecurity in that conflicted region.

As a reflection of that situation and due to the lack of real political will to make progress on sensitive issues, the Disarmament Commission did not hold a substantive meeting this year. Likewise, despite great efforts by various Chairmen, including Ecuador, the Conference on Disarmament has not succeeded in agreeing on a programme of work during recent sessions.

In such a complex international atmosphere, Ecuador reaffirms its full adherence to the purposes and principles of the San Francisco Charter. We also reaffirm our confidence in, and support for, a renewed multilateralism that is more effective and dynamic and that makes it possible to seriously address the priority items on the international agenda. That new multilateralism should also contribute decisively to solving conflicts, to constructive dialogue, to

development cooperation and, ultimately, to establishing peace throughout the world and building a more just and equitable international order grounded in solidarity.

Ecuador has repeatedly emphasized from this forum the need to respect and strengthen multilateral agreements on the elimination, reduction and limitation of armaments. Each time it has done so it has reaffirmed its commitment to the cause of disarmament. It is for that reason that we have been a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) since its inception. That is also the reason for our active participation in the drafting of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which declared Latin America a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Likewise, last November Ecuador deposited with the Secretariat its instrument of ratification for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). My country also supports the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and advocates strengthening its institutional capacity as an independent multilateral forum to ensure adequate control and monitoring of chemical weapons.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is directly linked to the social, economic and humanitarian problems caused by domestic civil conflicts, international conflicts and the activities of organized crime, particularly those linked to terrorism and drug trafficking. The implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference on this important issue will no doubt represent a positive step in the process of strengthening international peace and security.

My country is fully committed to the principles of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We therefore participated actively in the fourth meeting of States parties to the Convention, recently held in Geneva.

As an illustration of our pacifist vocation and as a reaffirmation of Ecuador's solid commitment to respect the norms and principles of international humanitarian law, it is worth pointing out that Ecuador has adhered to and ratified the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and its respective Protocols, as well as the Inter-American Convention against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunitions, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, two important international instruments that support international efforts to achieve disarmament and strengthen peace.

Ecuador believes that measures to build confidence and strengthen peace in the Americas are key to developing friendly relations and cooperation between peoples as part of the scheme to promote exchanges and to publicize information with regard to the mechanisms put in place in each country to promote disarmament and arms control.

For its part, my country fully meets the annual requirements pertaining to the implementation of the Register of Conventional Arms and submits its standardized report on military spending. In fact, it is worth emphasizing that, since reaching a peace agreement with Peru, military spending has dropped thanks to a programme to reduce such costs. That programme serves to support my country's commitment to reallocate resources from military spending to the successful development of its people. Similarly, Ecuador believes that, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council must take decisions to complement the few existing, and rather ineffective, regional and national provisions with comprehensive conventional disarmament measures and initiatives at the international level.

It is particularly gratifying to note the adoption of the Declaration on the establishment of a South American Zone of Peace during the second meeting of the Presidents of South America, which was held in Guayaquil last July. That historic event is a reflection of the best traditions of mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence of the peoples of the region. Among other things, the zone is premised on promoting confidence, cooperation and ongoing consultations in the areas of security and defence, coordinated action in international forums, transparency and placing gradual limits on the acquisition of weapons, in line with the Inter-American Convention in that regard and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

The adoption last July of the Lima Commitment — which is an Andean charter for peace and security — is also of special significance. That document sets out the principles and commitments for the development of a common security policy for the

subregion and the establishment of a zone of peace. It also contains principles and commitments for the regional steps to be taken in the fight against terrorism, controlling external defence costs, limiting conventional arms and increasing transparency. Moreover, the Lima Commitment also includes provisions to promote the declaration of Latin America as a zone free from air-to-air missiles, as well as medium- and long-range strategic missiles.

It is also gratifying to note that Cuba has decided to become a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to ratify the Treaty of Tlatelolco on the banning of nuclear arms in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Ecuador's commitment to the cause of peace, total and complete disarmament and the strengthening of international security through respect for, and strengthening of, the major principles of the rights of peoples. I assure the Committee that the delegation of Ecuador will participate constructively in bringing the Committee's important work to a successful conclusion.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.